

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
-----122329 222320Z /65

Z O 222302Z FEB 78 ZFF 4
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 3442
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02979

EXDIS
FOR WISNER AND HOUGHTON
NSC FOR BRZEZINSKI AND AARON
FROM DICK MOOSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: TALKS WITH OWEN

REF: LONDON 2978

1. HERewith MY COMMENTS ON REFTel. WOULD APPRECIATE
VIEWS OF ADDRESSEE POST BY NIACT IMMEDIATE CABLE ON
HOW WE MIGHT PROCEED FROM HERE, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD
TO OUR PROPOSED ONWARD TRAVEL TO AFRICA, IN LIGHT OF
PRESENT BRITISH ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS.

2. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT OWEN HAS NO INTEREST IN A CONTI-
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NUING EFFORT TO ENGAGE ALL THE RHODESIAN PARTIES IN A
SETTLEMENT EFFORT AS ENVISAGED IN THE BRITISH-AMERICAN
PLAN. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT OWEN IS ACTING ON THE BELIEF
THAT POLITICAL REALITIES AND SENTIMENTS HERE ARE SUCH
THAT HE MUST WORK TO MAKE THE BEST OF THE SALISBURY
TALKS. EMBASSY OFFICER RAY SEITZ ACCURATELY ANTICIPATED
AND ANALYZED OWEN'S THINKING IN A VERY PERCEPTIVE

TELEGRAM (LONDON 2838) WRITTEN BEFORE OUR ARRIVAL.
TODAY'S CONVERSATION FULLY BEARS OUT RAY'S ANALYSIS.

3. THERE ARE TWO WAYS OF APPROACHING THE CURRENT
SITUATION: (A) HOW TO DEAL WITH AN ANTICIPATED
AGREEMENT IN SALISBURY WHICH IS BEING ACCEPTED HERE,
IN AN UNCRITICAL MANNER, AS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION; AND,
(B) HOW TO DEAL WITH THE SALISBURY AGREEMENTS SO AS TO
MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EVENTUAL POLARIZING
EAST-WEST CONFLAGRATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WHICH WOULD
OFFER GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLOITATION BY THE SOVIETS
AND CUBANS AND THEREBY CONFOUND OUR ENTIRE AFRICA POLICY?
RECOGNIZING THE ENORMOUS DIFFICULTY OF MANAGING THE
LATTER CHALLENGE, I NEVERTHELESS BELIEVE THAT OUR
APPROACH TO THE IMMEDIATE SITUATION MUST BE FRAMED WITH
THAT DANGER UPPERMOST IN OUR MINDS.

4. WHETHER OR NOT ONE AGREES WITH THIS JUDGEMENT, I SEE
TWO PROBLEMS WITH OWEN'S DESIRE TO MOVE RAPIDLY TO
BRING NKOMO INTO THE SALISBURY PICTURE: (1) THE ODDS
AGAINST OWEN'S PLAN ARE PROHIBITIVE AND (2) ITS PURSUIT
IS LIKELY TO COST US DEARLY IN TERMS OF OUR CREDIBILITY
WITH THE FRONT LINE AND OUR AFRICA POLICY GENERALLY.

5. GIVEN OWEN'S ATTITUDE WE ARE NOW IN A POSITION OF
HAVING TO MANEUVER BETWEEN MAINTAINING A COMMON FRONT
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WITH THE BRITISH AND MAINTAINING OUR POSITION WITH THE
FRONT LINE. THE UNILATERAL ACTIONS WHICH HE HAS ALREADY
TAKEN, E.G. EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS HERE WITH SITHOLE,
AN APPROACH TO KAUNDA AND "SECRETMESSAGES TO NKOMO AND
SMITH , COULD WELL TAR US BY ASSOCIATION. JUST HANDLING
PRESS QUERIES TOMORROW PRESENTS A DIFFICULT CHALLENGE,
AS DOES THE QUESTION OF WHETHER WE SHOULD MEET WITH

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AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

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SITHOLE WHILE WE ARE HERE.

6. THE DECISION OF WHETHER WE SHOULD GO ON TO AFRICA FROM HERE RAISES A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS. IF WE RETURN TO WASHINGTON MAINTAINING OUR AGREED, BASICALLY NEUTRAL, PUBLIC STANCE WHILE THE BRITISH WHEEL AND DEAL AROUND THE SALISBURY TALKS, WE WILL BE SEEN TO GIVE CONSENT. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, WE SALLY FORTH TO AFRICA, WE WILL BE PUT ON THE SPOT. THERE ARE THESE CONSIDERATIONS IN FAVOR OF GOING:

- DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND LIMITATION;
- GAINING A BETTER FEEL OF FRONT LINE SENTIMENT;
- A MEASURE OF DISASSOCIATION (ASSUMING, AS IS

LIKELY, UNHAPPY BRITISH NON-PARTICIPATION). THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST GOING ARE THESE:

- POSSIBLE APPEARANCE OF (A) A US-UK OR (B) US

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COMPLICITY WITH UK;

- DIFFICULTY OF RESPONDING TO FRONT LINE DEMANDS THAT WE MAKE CLEAR OUR POSITION;
- AWKWARDNESS OF ARRANGING AND HANDLING MEETINGS WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, THE INTERNAL NATION-ALISTS AND SMITH.

7. WHETHER THE BRITISH ARE COMFORTABLE WITH IT OR NOT, AND SETTING ASIDE PRESENTATIONAL AND STAGE MANAGERIAL DIFFICULTIES, I COME DOWN ON THE SIDE OF AT LEAST RENEWING OUT CONTACTS WITH THE FRONT LINE AND THE NIGERIANS. EVEN IF IT LOOKS LIKE WE ARE GOING IT ALONE,

WE SHOULD NOT GIVE THE APPEARANCE THAT WE ARE INEVITABLY
LASHED TO THE SIDE OF THE BRITISH BOAT. IT IS JUST
POSSIBLE THAT THE FRONT LINE ARE AS WORRIED AS WE ARE
AT THE PROSPECT OF A GREAT EAST-WEST CONFRONTATION IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA. WHILE A ROUND OF TALKS MAY PRODUCE
ONLY EMBARRASSMENT AND STERILE RHETORIC,
A STRAIGHT TALKING, FRANK ASSESSMENT MIGHT PROTECT
OUR CREDIBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY.

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